

DHM Exhibition Preview 2025

As of: 15 January 2025, additions and alterations are subject to change



DEUTSCHES
HISTORISCHES
MUSEUM

**Es hätte
auch
anders
kommen
können.**

Until 11 January 2026

Roads not Taken.
Or: Things could have turned
out differently



Until 6 April 2025

What is Enlightenment? Questions for the
Eighteenth Century



23 Mai 2025 to 23 November 2025

On Displaying Violence:
First Exhibitions on the Nazi Occupation
in Europe, 1945-1948



14 November 2025 to 7 Juni 2026

Nature and German History.
Faith – Biology – Power (WT)

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**9 December 2022 to
11 January 2026**

**Roads not Taken.
Or: Things could have turned out
differently**

Starting from key dates in German history, the museum presents a look back(wards) at decisive historical events of the 19th and 20th centuries. It brings actual turning points face to face with what might have happened if it were not for various factors. Along 14 distinctive caesurae in the German history the probabilities of unrealised history – prevented by accidents, averted by misfires or other kinds of shortcomings – are explored: it is that which is known in the philosophy of history as contingency.

The course of these caesurae begins in 1989 with the Peaceful Revolution in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and ends in the year 1848, when Germany first tried to attempt a democratic awakening. The exhibition takes up retrospectively such topics as „Ostpolitik“, the building of the Wall, the Cold War, the assumption of power by the National Socialists, as well as revolution and democratisation at decisive points – and illustrates that history by no means had to end as it actually happened. In this way, milestones such as the Stalin Note of 1952, the Korean War in combination with the Berlin Airlift of 1948/49, the failed blasting of the bridge at Remagen in 1945, the attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler in 1945, the deposal of Chancellor Brüning in 1932, the revolution of 1918, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, or the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, appear in a new light.

This perspective, unusual for a history museum, should make it possible to see well-known facts in a new light and to encourage an understanding of the principal open-endedness of history as a result of constellations and decisions, actions and omissions.

The project manager is Fritz Backhaus; the curatorial team consists of Julia Franke, Stefan Paul-Jacobs, and Dr. Lili Reyels.

An exhibition of the Deutsches Historisches Museum in cooperation with



Pei building, basement



**18 October 2024 to
6 April 2025**

What is Enlightenment? Questions for the Eighteenth Century

'What is Enlightenment?' asked pastor Johann Friedrich Zöllner in 1783, writing for the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. The editors of the monthly magazine picked up on this question and put it to their readers, thus igniting a debate that would shape the course of philosophy.

The exhibition, titled 'What is Enlightenment? Questions for the Eighteenth Century', likewise explores this term from many sides. It concentrates on the most important debates of that era, taking its contradictions and ambivalence into account by revealing conflicts over concepts and demands, rather than presenting the Enlightenment as a homogeneous, progressive undertaking. In doing so, it also aims to make clear that the ideas of equality and tolerance prevalent then do not correspond to those held today and, moreover, were often not implemented in practice. The Enlightenment is often referred to in current debates about the social issues of today and about democracy as a form of government. The exhibition is also meant to provide a historical context for these conversations.

The exhibition at the DHM examines the so-called 'long eighteenth century' from an international perspective. The range of topics includes, among other things: the search for knowledge and a new kind of science; debates about religion, the equality and liberty of mankind; the demand for civil rights; mercantilism and cosmopolitanism. The collections of the DHM provides many of the exhibits, which are on display alongside objects loaned by other museums and archives in Germany, as well as Belgium, France, Great Britain, Austria, Switzerland and the United States. The exhibition takes an inclusive and accessible approach. Multimedia and interactive elements expand upon the exhibition themes and actively involve the visitors. There is also a children's tour, showing that questions about the Enlightenment can also be relevant to them.

The exhibition is being curated by Professor Liliane Weissberg.

With a focus on new inclusive educational methods, the exhibition project is funded by the



View of the exhibition "Warszawa oskarża"
(Warsaw accuses), National Museum in Warsaw, 1945.
Photo: National Museum in Warsaw

**23 May 2025 to
23 November 2025**

**On Displaying Violence:
First Exhibitions on the Nazi
Occupation in Europe, 1945-1948**

How did post-war societies process the experience of violence and annihilation caused by the Second World War and the forcible occupation of large parts of Europe by National Socialist Germany? A previously overlooked, but historically influential form of coming to terms with this desolation were the exhibitions that were organised in post-war Europe between 1945 and 1948 by institutions, groups, and many other players in numerous countries. In those times of social distress, political insecurity, lasting violence and uncertain future prospects, the exhibitions aimed to document and visualise the consequences of the Holocaust and the Nazi crimes.

For the first time the Deutsches Historisches Museum plans to examine the history of this pan-European phenomenon on the basis of early exhibitions in London, Paris, Warsaw, Liberec and Bergen-Belsen. The DHM presentation focuses on the different forms and contents with which the exhibition makers of that time – including victims of Nazi persecution and Holocaust survivors – dealt with the violent events, the resistance, the perpetrators, and the loss of cultural heritage. Also illustrated are the different notions of the future that found expression in these exhibitions.

Embedded in their respective local and national contexts, the various imageries used to visualise the terror will be analysed and the sources compared. The exhibition will trace the motivation of the participants, but also the impact on audiences as the exhibitions travelled across Europe from country to country. Original objects, photographs, films, documents, artworks and multimedia presentations will enable visitors to experience the challenges and backgrounds of this "first look back" at the German tyranny all over Europe.

The exhibition is being realised in cooperation with the [Project Group for the documentation centre "German Occupation of Europe in the Second World War" \(ZWBE\)](#). An accompanying programme conceived by the DHM and the ZWBE will explore the topic of German occupation and tyranny in Europe in greater depth.

The curator of the exhibition is Dr Agata Pietrasik.

Pei building, ground floor



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**14 November 2025 to
7 June 2026**

**Nature and German History
Faith – Biology –Power (WT)**

The Deutsches Historisches Museum is currently planning the exhibition "Nature and German History. Faith – Biology – Power", to open in November 2025. Nine-hundred years of German history will be displayed across 1,000 square metres of exhibition space. The spectrum ranges from Hildegard of Bingen's concept of "viriditas", the greening power of creation, in the 12th century to the early anti-nuclear movement in Wyhl and the different concepts of nature in the two Germanys towards the end of the 20th century. Moreover, the co-option of what was considered "natural" was one of the ideological tenets of the Nazi dictatorship, which attempted to bring both "external" and "internal" nature under their power of definition and rule by decreeing innumerable laws. The "Nuremberg Laws" and the "Reich Conservation Act" were both enacted in the same year: 1935.

The time periods are presented in five chronologically arranged rooms with different stations. These stations are intended to present events or developments in the form of "vignettes" in which the concept of nature is changed or characterised in a striking way. The large-scale project focuses on the changing significance and conceptuality of "Nature" and examines it as a political factor in German history. The exhibition traces the historical stages of these developments as well as the politicisation and instrumentation of the concept of nature as it unfolded in German history. Who defines what is considered nature? Who can influence it? How does the understanding of internal and external nature vary? And what happens to nature when unforeseen events occur that lead to political actions?

The exhibition will be curated by Prof. Dr Julia Voss.

Pei building, first floor